

The "benefits of localism" are often cited as the reason for our nationwide patchwork of local broadcast monopolies. But what are these "benefits" from localism in San Antonio? In San Antonio we have a local public broadcaster and affiliates of CBS, ABC, NBC, Univision and Telemundo that met their deadlines in the DTV transition. These stations also pass-through all high definition quality if offered by their respective networks.

Unfortunately not all local stations offer such benefits. The Sinclair-owned local Fox and WB affiliates did not broadcast a strong enough digital signal that I view them in my home until the end of September 2003. I live within the city limits of San Antonio and have a rooftop UHF antenna and Channelmaster preamp. Local commercial broadcasters were required to have a city-grade signal on the air on May 1st, 2002. Sinclair-owned KRRT-DT and KABB-DT are not just late to the party; instead of passing through hi def 5.1 programming, they send out 480i content that looks and sounds worse than their analog over the air signal. Surely this cannot be a "benefit of localism". The San Antonio viewer would be better served with a direct network feed from Fox and WB than to have the audio and video quality so degraded by our half-hearted local affiliates.

Sinclair's weak efforts look positively Herculean when compared to the digital non-broadcasters at our local UPN, PAX and TBN stations. UPN now offers a high definition version of Enterprise and Jake 2.0. Viewers in San Antonio and Austin have no chance to see this quality, since our local UPN affiliate doesn't even have a construction permit for a digital station! Likewise, PAX and TBN seem to have no firm timeline for getting on with the DTV transition. It seems hollow for Bud Paxson to harangue the Commission about multicast must carry when he can't even be bothered to get a top 40 DMA station like San Antonio on the air in digital!

Surely the Commission can apply some pressure on these laggard affiliates who show no interest in serving their communities with the high audio and video quality available from their networks. DTV must carry is fine for the broadcasters. How about HDTV must pass-through for the end consumer? Otherwise must I sell my home and move if I want all the HDTV content that the networks currently offer? Nonsense, the Commission should hold local broadcasters to their commitments under the (H)DTV transition.